Tammy Thompson Takes on the Upside Down by Ridea

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Summary: AKA How Hawkins Got Its Groove Back...kicking and screaming... Everyone asks - what would you do if you could change how the story goes...but what if you don't know the story?

1. Chapter 1

A/N: I cannot tell you how excited I am to share this with all of you. I had a lot of fun writing it and I am currently chapters and chapters ahead of my posting it. I really hope you enjoy this as much as we have.

Thank you especially to Ellie. I could not have done this without you and you have no idea how much your support and help has meant to me.

Chapter One

Waking up hurt more than usual. Normally if I hadn't gotten enough sleep I'd wake up with a headache and a large urge to stay in my bed. This felt like I had been hit by a truck. Or that I did a triathlon without any training.

I rolled over, trying to get away from the sun that was beaming into the room. Everything hurt even more and as I moved my stomach clenched. I felt myself bolting up, ignoring the pain as I reached for the garbage can that should have been next to my bed. I hit a night stand instead. I forced my eyes open, catching sight of the can across the room almost instantly. I moved without thinking, praying that I got there before I threw up. Saliva accumulated in my mouth bringing that feeling that throwing up was imminent. My body tangled in the sheets as I dove off the bed. I hit the ground hard and before I could stop myself, I threw up all over the carpet. I didn't even have a carpet.

I pushed back my hair. Was it shorter? I cringed at the vomit in it. What the hell happened last night? "Honey?" There was a knock at the door. "Are you alright?" I blearily looked up at the woman as she opened the door. "Oh my god! Tammy!" The woman dove forwards and knelt at my side. Who the fuck was she? And why was she touching me? I tried to pull back and hit my head on the nightstand behind me. "Baby, are you okay?" She grabbed my arm. "Here let me help you. Get back into bed. I'll call the school to tell them you're sick...and get this cleaned up. I'll bring you a bowl."

I struggled to get up and it was only with her help that I was able to get back in the bed. When she left to get the bowl, I looked around. Where the hell was I? The room was pink. There were posters on the wall including Madonna and what looked like George Michael. My head pounded. I stared at the wall for what felt like ages until the woman came back with a bowl. Where the fuck was I?

"I called the school," the woman said as she walked in. "You'll stay home today. Hopefully it's just a stomach bug."

I stared at her confused. "School?" I hadn't gone to school in years. Not since I graduated university.

"Yeah, honey." She sat down beside me on the bed. "School. Don't worry, I'll be home. You call me with whatever you need. Okay?"

I nodded at her. She needed to leave so I could figure this out.

"I'm going to get this cleaned up." She looked at me and glanced at my hair. "I'll bring you a washcloth." I watched her go, trembling and trying to hold on to what little control I had left. I felt like I had been run over and thrown around like I was a dog's chew toy. I was in a room that wasn't mine. Some woman was calling me honey and baby and *Tammy*. And apparently I had school. Something was very *very* wrong.

I was right.

I stared at my reflection in the mirror. Except it wasn't me. Sure, it made all the faces I was making. The reflection stuck out its tongue at the same time as I did, but it wasn't me. I was an average height woman with large thighs, stomach and breasts and a hip to ankle ratio that could make men weep if I really tried. My reflection was not. The girl, and that was the only way to describe her, was taller than I was. Thinner. She had some curves but she was exactly what I said she was. A girl. She looked like she was in her late teens. What the fuck.

I felt like screaming. I felt like screaming at the top of my lungs and demanding my body back. What the hell happened? And where was I?

I felt a panic attack starting. My chest tightened and breathing was getting difficult. The hairs on my arms stood up with goosebumps and I broke out into a cold sweat. It was like I had a fever. I tried to focus, to calm down and settle myself somehow. I focused on the Wham! poster on the wall. It wasn't working. I felt like I was going to be sick.

It would have been one thing to wake up in a stranger's house after a night out, likely one filled with mistakes, but I had been awake, hadn't I? Before I woke up here. I was at work and was on my way to meet some recruiters for lunch. Right? So how had I ended up here? And where was here? I threw up again.

I generally prided myself to be a logical and intelligent person. Those qualities didn't seem to be helping right now. Each time I caught sight of myself in the mirror, I thought there was a stranger in the room with me. I nearly jumped out of my skin every time. I looked around the room. There had to be something that told me where I was and who I was inhabiting.

My search didn't uncover more than some vinyls and cassettes. Who the hell even had these anymore? Hipsters? There were a few books on the shelves but mostly knickknacks on the desk. Small things. Weird ticket stubs to movies, some that I recognized and others that I didn't. Polaroid photos of friends. Definitely a hipster at this rate, or she was doing some focused project on the 80's or early 90's. I hadn't even seen these in years, not outside of ads and Instagram filters.

It was becoming more apparent that I was nowhere near home, the more I looked around. I hadn't seen any sign of a computer, a laptop or even a cell phone. Who doesn't have a cellphone? At least if I got a computer I could check the IP address or more likely check google to see where it thought I was. Maybe this girl was already signed into social media which would be a huge help. Unfortunately, all I found was a diary. God, was I stuck with Mormons? Or a cult? Maybe I was brainwashed into not remembering! How was I going to get...I stopped myself from spiraling further into my imagination. There was no point in making things worse and having another panic attack without any facts. I opened the diary.

Dear Diary,

My name is Tammy Thomspon. Im 7 years old and got you for my birtday! We live in Hawkins and I live with my mom and my dad! I'm going to write in you every day!

She did not. The entries were sporadic but she did keep at it for years. It was a little impressive. She did not date the entries though, because of course not. It couldn't be that easy.

Diary,

I know I haven't been writing but so much has happened! I'm going to high school! Maybe this will finally be the year that Steve sees me! God, I hope so. My dreams of Tommy H and Carol moving suddenly has yet to happen, but it doesn't matter. I have a plan! Once I'm done high school (and marrying Steve), I'm going to Nashville! I'm going to be a star!

It continued like that. From what I read, Tammy was a dreamer. A hopeful idealistic girl who just wanted to make her mark. She seemed to think it would be through singing. There were tapes. Tammy was determined enough to record herself singing. It was awful. She was stretching her voice too high. Sounded like she was trying hard to be Barbara Streisand. She was more suited for Joan Jett, or that singer who used to be in Gossip Girl.

One other thing I learned was the date, or at least, an idea of the date. She dated the last entry, the one about Steve and starting high school, as **1981**.

I shut the book instantly. It wasn't possible. It couldn't be. There was no feasible way that I not only body swapped into someone in another country, but time travelled as well. Panic welled up in me. I needed to get out. I needed to go and get home and get out.

A knock sounded at the door, cutting through my thoughts, and I scrambled to climb back into the bed. Jesus. This girls bed felt like it was ten feet off the ground. It's a wonder I didn't break my neck falling off.

The woman walked in, this time holding a glass. "I brought you some Vernors. Are you feeling better?" What the hell was Vernors?

I nodded and accepted the glass. It looked like ginger ale, smelled like it too. "Yeah, thanks."

She leaned forward and brushed some of my hair back. "Is it just nerves? I remember when I started senior year. It was terrifying but exciting. I met your father in high school, you know?"

I stared at her. I couldn't stop myself from watching this woman wide eyed. She had just given me a date and confirmed the fact that this girl was in high school. God, that meant I was in high school. Like I didn't have enough of that when I did it myself. I went over in my head what I knew about the US school system. Senior was equal to grade 12 in Canada. Fuck. That was another problem. I grew up using the metric system, not the US one.

The woman laughed. "Don't worry, I won't tease you further. I'm going shopping before your father and I go out." She leaned forward and kissed my forehead, or Tammy's forehead. I froze. "Love you. Feel better."

I watched her walk away. What would she say if she knew I wasn't her daughter? How could I explain that? And what the hell happened to the real Tammy? I dug my finger into the bruise on my arm that grew from hitting the night table. It still felt real.

I got up quickly and kept searching. I needed to go home. I...I was in the past, sure, and totally not myself, but I needed to get home. Since I was stuck in the States, I needed a passport to get there. I had to find Tammy's...and convince my mother I was real. I wasn't even born yet. God, there was no way my mother would even believe me. She was a practical woman who put the minimal effort into taking care of me when I was sick and just made sure I had what I needed. She wasn't prone to flights of fancy or fantasy. She'd never believe me. Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck.

The longer I was here, the more complicated everything seemed to be getting. I flung myself back in the bed and burst into tears. Maybe if I passed out, crying myself to sleep, I'd wake up at home and this would be a bad dream. This was too much.

I woke up in the middle of the night.

In the dark, I could pretend that the room was mine. At least until I fell off the bed while trying to get off of it. I turned on the light and stared at my reflection again. It wasn't me. She moved the same way I did. It just didn't look like me. As weird as it sounded, she didn't feel like me. I felt like an intruder. Like a demon from that show Supernatural. I couldn't feel anyone else in my mind, which made me wonder, what happened to her. Why was I here?

I stared at the mirror before I turned away. I was half tempted to cover it but that would likely raise questions. First things first. I had to figure out who the hell Tammy was so I could impersonate her enough to find my way out of here, out of her.

I scoured every part of her room. I tried to memorize her friends and thanked god Tammy wrote names on the backs of photos. I read every inch of any diary or writing I could find. Even old school assignments that she kept for some reason. She was a pretty average kid. Her handwriting was perfect, but my writing looked like a doctors when I wrote fast enough so anything looked good to me. She looked like she was getting mainly Bs and Cs. Probably because she was so focused on her singing, she didn't seem to apply the same drive to the rest of her schooling.

The clothes in the closet told me another story.

"Oh honey, no," I muttered. It was an atrocity. The fashion in the 80s was filled with colours and contradictions. Tammy's closet seemed to hold the worst of it. None of it seemed well suited to her. The clothes didn't fit properly from what I could tell. They looked like they were too short and a weird mixture of tight and baggy. It was all the typical tragedy of unpopular teens, no matter what decade. If anything, I made a mental note that before I left I'd ensure she had a decent selection. A small payback for accidentally taking her over, along with better grades if I really had to do school over.

Since it was likely that I would actually have to go to school tomorrow, I had to find an outfit that worked. At least one that didn't look too awful. One had to blend in, at least to make sure I didn't draw too much attention. I looked back at the closet. Staying in her outfits would probably let me basically disappear in the crowd. I wasn't sure I could subject either of us to it though. I had a headache

thinking about it.

I chose flared jeans and a slightly tighter shirt. It was a size small. I didn't think I had ever fit into a size small in my entire life. I threw on an oversized sweater over it, ignoring the familiar feeling of wanting to hide. It really was just like high school all over again and I hadn't even gone yet.

I sat outside and watched the sunrise on the porch. The street was silent. Hawkins must be a small town. It was weird. I was used to hearing the sounds of traffic, of people constantly walking by. It just made everything worse somehow. It felt like I was alone.

I couldn't stop myself. I started crying. It wasn't fair. I was supposed to be at home, maybe on a date with a man who would pretend that he wasn't intimidated by the fact I was more successful than him. We'd have some mediocre sex and I'd kick him out so I could sleep alone before I had to wake up and go back to work. I shouldn't be possessing some kid. It wasn't possible. It shouldn't be possible. I just wanted to go home. I wanted *my* mom.

I kept crying.

"Have a good day! Call me if you feel sick again!"

I waved off Tammy's mother as I turned and faced the school. It was a single story building. Gods, this was a small town. No time like the present, I guessed, and made my way forward. It was only as I stepped into the main foyer that I realized something. They had lockers. Tammy had a locker and I had no idea where it was. As a matter of fact, I had no idea what her schedule was. What if there were assigned seats?

I turned, ready to walk out and skip. Tammy could handle one day off. Or two. Whatever. I was nowhere near ready for this.

"Hey! Tammy! Where are you going?"

I almost didn't stop, but the fact that whoever was calling Tammy sounded like she knew her well.

I forced myself to turn around, ignoring the voice in my head that

was screaming at me that this was a bad idea. The girl waving at me was recognizable. She was from one of the pictures in Tammy's room. Abby, or was it Ally? I walked up to her and smiled while praying to any god that heard me that I'd make it through this.

"Hey," I said.

"Like, where were you yesterday?" Abby asked. I couldn't stop staring at her hair. It came down to her jaw but she had teased it so much that it almost looked like a halo around her head.

"Sick," I said.

"Ew. You're better now, right?" Once I nodded, the girl grabbed my hand, "Great! You won't believe what Tommy H. and Carol were fighting about yesterday! Come on! We're going to be late for homeroom!"

I pulled my hand back. "You go ahead," I said. "I gotta go to the office."

"Why?"

I shrugged. "I missed something yesterday." I waved her off and headed down the hall.

"Tammy!" Her voice called me back. I looked back and she was staring at me confused. "The office is that way…" she pointed to the hall on my left.

"Obviously," I called back, striding down the hall quickly if only to get away from the mean child. Christ. This was worse than I thought.

I strode up to the secretary's counter. I could do this. One doesn't get through university and end up a recruiter without successfully learning how to bullshit. It took a few moments before they even realized I was there.

"Can I help you…?" The older woman asked. I wasn't sure if it was a good thing or not that she didn't recognize Tammy on sight.

"Yes, ma'am. I lost my schedule and locker info. I was hoping you

could help me please?"

She peered at me over her glasses before she sighed. Loudly. "Name?"

"Kat -" I stopped myself. I wasn't Katya anymore. Least, not externally. "Tammy. Tammy Thompson."

"Okay, Ms. Thompson." I waited while she found a file and then seemed to copy it. It felt like it took forever. This would be so much faster if I just had a phone and she could just email it to me. This felt like a snail's pace. How did anyone get anything done like this? I tried not to groan and lay my head on the counter.

She finally handed me the copy. "Don't lose this one."

"I won't," I said, smiling up at her. At least one thing was working out. "Thank you!" She looked at me surprised. Did no one say thank you?

I left the office and the halls were quiet. Okay, on to the next step of the plan. Find the classes.

Turned out, once I had my schedule, finding the classes was a breeze. Since it was only a one story building, everything was fairly in numerical order. The only thing not was the gym, but that was easy to find as well. It was creepy though, walking through the halls. They were nearly empty and I could hear voices in unison repeating something. It sounded like the same thing in each class. It was like part of a horror movie.

I walked into English late. Somehow, it felt as awkward as it did when I was a teenager. Everyone was staring at me.

"Sorry I'm late," I said to the teacher. "I had an issue with the office."

"Just sit down Ms. Thompson," she said, waving me towards the only empty seat in the class.

"Thank you," I said. I sat down quickly and hard. My face flamed as everyone glanced at me. Why the hell were these seats so low? Ally, or was it Abby? was looking at me like I was crazy. The teacher started talking again and delving into the subject of Shakespeare. I

had studied this before. In detail. I had taken a few English classes in University and no matter what, it all seemed to connect to Shakespeare. At least, many teachers seemed to think so.

Already bored, I looked around the class. Some of the kids were goofing off. I saw one girl drawing on her shoes. She looked up at me as I was staring at her. I gave a half smile before looking away and that's when I saw him.

I suddenly knew why that name was familiar. It wasn't just Tammy's diary. He looked back, smiling at some girl across the aisle. Steve Harrington wasn't just Tammy's crush. He was from a show. His face filled my dashboards on all my social media for a time. I felt my stomach drop. Nope. Nope nope nope. I quickly looked away, trying to quell my panic.

This was bad. This was very bad. Also, *impossible*, but at the moment the only thought I could focus on was that this was bad. I had never watched the show. I had been told repeatedly to try it out, and I meant to...I just never have. I knew it wasn't a happy go lucky teen drama show though. There were monsters. That's how Steve got so popular, by fighting monsters and protecting kids. I did not want to be in a world with real fucking monsters!

Holy shit. I needed to get out of here. I needed to get out fast. I felt myself hyperventilating. Fuck it. I made a mental apology to Tammy before I stood up and practically ran from the classroom.

"Miss. Thompson! Where do you think you're going?" I ignored her voice calling out after me. I'd go back and apologize, say I was sick again. I just needed to get some air. Was it even safe though? I didn't know enough to know what happened and when?

I ran through the hallway. Thankfully the school was not large enough for it to take long for me to get outside. I stopped when it finally felt like the walls weren't closing in on me.

"Take me back!" I screamed at the sky. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know why I was here. I just needed to go home. I started trying to list all the gods that I knew, which weren't many and before I realized it, I was calling on fictional characters. "Thor!

Heimdall! Doctor! Anyone!"

There was no answer.

I didn't expect there to be, not really. It was just a hope. I had come here by some power so surely there should be a way for me to get back. Right? I had to give Tammy her body back and go home.

"Are you okay?"

I turned at the voice. Despite all my yelling, it hadn't occurred to me that someone would actually hear me. At least, not someone here.

It was the girl from the class, the one who had been drawing on her shoes. She looked concerned, and a little wary. No surprise. She probably thought I was crazy. I was starting to think so. I felt my throat start to close up and tears started to well up in my eyes. I dug my fingers into the bruise on my arm as if I could hold onto myself with it.

I tried to fight it. I didn't know how emotional Tammy was and I had no idea if she knew this girl or not, even just as an acquaintance. It didn't work though.

"Tammy?"

The sound of her name broke me. I couldn't help myself. I just started crying in earnest. I didn't know what was wrong with me. I should be able to control myself, at least until I was alone.

"Hey hey hey, it's okay!" The girl was suddenly beside me. She put an arm around my shoulders and started leading me somewhere. "Just breathe, okay? Here, sit."

I looked up. She had led up to the bleachers at the end of the field. I tried to relax, to at least calm myself to stop crying, but I stared at this strange girl who was dressed like nothing I was used to, and I'd start up again. I hadn't been this much of an emotional mess since I was in high school. It suddenly dawned on me. I was in a teenager's body and her emotions and hormones likely weren't regulated yet.

"Shit."

The girl scowled at me. "I know we're not friends, but I'm trying to help you. No need to be rude."

"Not you," I said, waving my hand slightly before taking a deep breath. The revelation had apparently shocked me out of crying. I wiped away the tears left on my face. "I just…" I shook my head. I couldn't explain even if I wanted to. I gave her a small smile though. "Thanks. I appreciate you coming out after me. You didn't have to."

She shrugged and looked like she was trying to act nonchalant. "Someone had to." She had a point. If anything, Ally should have. She was Tammy's friend. Wasn't she? This girl had come though, despite saying that they weren't friends. Well, I was going to do Tammy another service.

I held out my hand. "I'm Ka..Tammy. I'm Tammy." I really had to get that under control.

She looked at me strangely. She finally reached out and shook my hand. "Robin. We have three classes together."

"Yeah," I said quickly, trying to recover. "But if we're going to be friends, we gotta start on the right foot."

"Friends?" she asked. She looked a little suspicious, but also hopeful? I hoped so.

"Yeah," I said. "Friends."

[tbc]

2. Chapter 2

A/N: Thank you to everyone who is giving this a chance. It's a bit of set up, I know, but getting to know our girl is only the beginning. We have some good things ahead that I think you'll enjoy. I know I do. Thanks again to Ellie without who this would never be possible.

By the way, we fancasted Tammy as Elisabeth Shue. If you want to know who we cast as her parents, let me know. :)

Chapter Two

I made my way back into the school once I was presentable enough, according to Robin. I ignored the whispers that followed me and headed straight for English. The teacher was sitting behind her desk when I got there.

"Excuse me, Ms." I said as I stood in the doorway.

"Ms. Thompson, I didn't expect to see you." She leaned back in her chair and waited for my response. She looked a little resigned and I wondered how many kids came up to her with excuses.

"I wanted to come and apologize. I interrupted your class twice, both coming in and running out. I'm sorry about that. I have no real excuse except that I suddenly felt sick. Either way, I could have handled it better and simply asked to be excused."

The woman stared at me for a moment before nodding. "Thank you for that. Are you feeling better?"

I nodded. "Yeah, it was just…" I thought of what to say. A version of the truth would likely be my best bet, but I wasn't sure how they'd take a panic attack. I had a feeling though that if I said I was going to throw up someone would suggest I was pregnant. I was pretty sure Tammy wasn't. Oh god, I hoped not. "I had a panic attack," I finally said. "I was sick and I've been trying to get ready because of course, one year til Nashville! And there's so much to do! I don't know if I'm ready yet but I am. It's just...I don't even know." I stopped myself from the sudden tangent I went on. I figured if Tammy was that

passionate about Nashville, people would know.

"As long as you're okay," she finally said. She looked a little overwhelmed, though I wasn't sure if it was my admittance of a panic attack or the slight verbal diarrhea.

"Yes. I am. At least, I think so."

"Best get on to your next class then."

"Right!" I smiled at the teacher and waved as I left. "Thank you!"

The rest of the day was thankfully far more uneventful. There were a few rumours but no one had outright said anything to me about running out of class so I ignored it for the most part. It seemed pretty pointless but I supposed in a small town like this, drama was the only real form of entertainment. Especially since there was no internet.

I was bored. I had learned most of this stuff already. I knew more of it than the kids here, not including history or social studies. I could barely remember my Canadian history, despite having taken a course in it. I didn't know how long I was going to be here. I needed to find my way back, but since Tammy was required to be in school, there had to be some way of making it at least more interesting or I was going to be falling asleep.

I made my way back to the office at the end of the day. It was still technically the first week of school and if any changes were to be made, now would be the time. I just needed a reason. One that Tammy would justify.

I waited until the secretary noticed me. It was the same one from this morning.

"Can I help you?" she asked.

"Yes, I just had a quick question. I was wondering if it was at all possible to get a list of the classes available. I'm thinking of changing up my schedule to something aligning more with my goals. I just want to know what's available and what the requirements are for taking it." The woman stared at me as if she couldn't figure me out. It was becoming a recurring thing but I didn't think I was doing

anything strange. "I know it's the end of the day, and I'm sorry for springing this on you. I can come back tomorrow morning if that's better?"

"You're aware that some courses are mandatory?" she finally said.

I nodded. "Yes. I was hoping, if at all possible, to see if there was an independent study for some of them, that I could test out of on my own. If not then I'll focus on reorganizing my electives." I wasn't sure how many electives these kids got, but there had to be some.

"It's never been done before," she warned. "Not here."

"That's fine. Can't grow without a challenge."

She smiled at me slowly like she was amused by my answer. "Okay." She moved around the office, pulling out papers from different areas and filing cabinets. She explained them as she lay them out in front of me. "This is the list of classes available. It lists the electives and prerequisites you need for those classes, as well as your required courses. You will have to lobby your teachers in the required courses for independent study. If they refuse, then I cannot help you. You will have to get parental permission for changing your schedule and for certain classes, for instance if you decide to attempt shop class. You will also need your teacher's permission in the classes you want to transfer into because the school year has already started. The forms needed are here. Fill them out, get the signatures and then we can see about moving you around."

I smiled widely. It was a lot of work, but if it kept me from being bored, it would be worth it. Until I found a way home, I was stuck here. I might as well learn something new. "Thank you," I said.

"You're welcome." She then added a small booklet on to the pile of papers. "I have a feeling you'll need this too."

I looked at the cover. *Rules and Regulations. Hawkins High School 1982*. That might actually come in handy. I suspected that the 80s wasn't as progressive as I was used to. I might have to fight my way into my schedule. You can't bend the rules without knowing them first.

"Thank you. I really appreciate this."

She nodded at me. "Come back when you've finished the forms."

"I will."

"Good. Now go home." I laughed at the dismissal before I left with a wave goodbye.

Tammy's mother was waiting for me outside the school. It took me a moment to recognize the car and I was helped by her mother honking the horn and waving at me.

"Are you alright? It looked like you didn't see me," her mother said.

"Sorry, I got a lot on my mind."

"Hmm? Like what?" her mother smiled at me. "A boy?"

"No," I said. There likely wasn't going to be any boys while I was here. They all were so...young. "I'm thinking of changing my schedule. Take classes that will help me more. Expand my repertoire, so to speak."

"Your repertoire?" she asked.

"Yeah," I said, thinking quickly of a reason that Tammy would likely give. "If I'm going to be a star, I need to be prepared for anything, right? Give myself a leg up on the competition."

"If you say so, honey."

I suddenly felt sorry for Tammy. Her mother was a little dismissive of these dreams of hers. It seemed unlikely that a small town girl from Indiana would make it in Nashville, but Taylor Swift did, didn't she? Actually, I had no idea where she was from, but the point was that if she tried hard enough, anything should have been possible. No wonder she was so gung ho about leaving, especially if she was lacking support. Her friend at school didn't even come see if she was okay when I ran out. A person needed strong friendships, especially in high school which had the potential to be the worst time in people's lives. It likely didn't help that Tammy wasn't here. I was. I

had to do my best for her so that when she got back, it wasn't a complete shit show for her.

When we got back to the house, I made an excuse of homework to go back to Tammy's bedroom. Her mother just told me that dinner was at six and to be there.

I closed the door and took a breath. I was finally alone. There was some freedom in not having to pretend to be Tammy, at least, not while I was alone. I didn't have to worry about anyone seeing me acting...like me. I walked to the desk and passed the full length mirror she had. The reflection was a stark reminder that I wasn't me, at least not to everyone else. I stared at the blond girl in the mirror. I needed to think, and I couldn't do that with Tammy staring at me. I grabbed the blanket of the bed and covered the mirror.

I took a scrunchie off of her desk and tied her hair back. I lay her diaries out in front of me and grabbed the paper with the courses, as well as the rules and regulations of the school. I needed to see my options and figure out a way that it would make sense why Tammy would take them. Her passion to be a star could likely work in my favour, provided that I explained it in the right way. First I had to pick my courses.

This schedule was insane. There were five slots I could fill a day. A day. Last time I was in school it was in University and I had maybe four a day and that was pushing it. How did these kids survive?

There were a few required courses. English. Math. Civics. Gym. Standard ones that you'd expect. It listed a statistics course as one of the math courses available. I had taken one before in university. I made a note to take it again. It'd be a lot easier than calculus and that would let me focus on more important things, like going home. The electives were far more interesting. For the electives, there were a few that stood out. Shop, for one which was no longer offered where I came from. Typing. There was a language course but I had barely passed the required french classes I had to take when I was in high school. There was no way I was going to subject Tammy and I to it. I added chemistry. I didn't know much about the science but Mythbusters had shown me the possibilities it had. Especially if I added shop class into the equation. I would be able to actually try

some of the experiments myself. Maybe.

The only problem that I felt would occur was getting into the shop class. I had to get parental and teacher permission, and I had a feeling it was a male dominated class. Thankfully, and I wondered if the secretary expected this of me, I had been given the rule book. And from what I could gather...there was no specific rule banning me from the class. As long as I had permission.

The first challenge was Tammy's parents.

My first real look at both of them together was during dinner. They didn't look that much older than I was. Her father was greying slightly which worked for him, and spent much of the time complaining about men at his work. I was pretty sure he was where Tammy got her height from, and her hair. Maybe also her good looks. Both her mother and father were fairly attractive. Tammy got lucky in the genetic lottery. Her mother served everyone then spent most of the meal nodding and commenting on things her father said. Apparently she had spent the day grocery shopping and seeing friends.

"You're awfully quiet, Tammy. How was school?" her mother finally asked.

"Good," I said. "I just...I've had a lot on my mind and I think I figured out what I want to change my courses to. I just need your permission."

"Change your courses?" her dad looked at me. "To what?"

"Well, I'd keep English and History. I want to change Calculus to Statistics and change the electives. I was thinking of Chemistry, Typing and Shop?"

Both her parents were staring at me in surprise.

"Shop class?" her mother asked.

"Yeah," I said. I had come up with what I hoped was a reasonable explanation. "I figured that if I took shop, the knowledge of woodworking would help me create sets, which would help me get a

foot in the door on my way to stardom. Having an understanding of the work that people put into creating things, especially if it's going to showcase me, will only help me in my future." I felt like Rachel Berry from Glee. "If I can create something, and learn how to do so, that can be my starting/stepping stone. If I work hard, I can make my way up from the bottom, right?"

"But honey, shop class is for boys. What about home ec?" I dug my thumb into my thigh and clenched my teeth together, trying not to react. I needed to be calm to get my point across.

"I've done home ec for years." Fuck. I had no idea if that was true or not. I had only really glanced at her homework assignments, enough to give me a sense of what kind of student Tammy was. I prayed I was right. "There is nothing in the school rules that say I can't take it. This is something that I feel will really help me. Don't you want me to be happy?" It was a low blow.

"Let her take it," Tammy's father said. "She wants to fight her way through there, let her try. But," and he looked at me very carefully, "if you go through with this, I expect you pass with flying colours."

I grinned at him. "I will."

I went to school early the next day. Tammy's father had signed off on my required forms and I spent a good part of the night trying to memorize the rule book. I had a feeling that my biggest block would come from the school itself.

The shop class was hidden at the back of the school. It was empty and I knocked on the door before calling out into the room. "Hello?"

"Hello!" A voice called back. A man who looked like he was in his late fifties stepped out of a room on the side. "Can I help you?"

"I hope so," I said. I stepped forward and held out my hand. "I'm Tammy Thompson."

He shook my hand and I could feel grease on his fingers. "Simon Caldwell. What can I do for you Miss. Thompson?"

"I'd like to take your class."

He looked surprised. "What?"

"I'd like to take your class," I repeated. "I'm aware that I haven't taken any before, but I figured now's the time. I need your permission though."

"You understand what we do here, right?"

"Yes. You work machines, you use tools and you build. That's what I want to learn."

He rubbed a hand on his face. "Are you sure? There ain't been a girl in this class...since I don't know when." That was unfortunate.

"If you let me in, I'm sure."

"The boys here won't like it, you realise that. You're likely to hear a lot of comments that won't be kind to you." He seemed like he was trying to warn me more than actively suggesting I take something else.

"Trust me, sir," I said. "I can handle it." Which I felt was true. I was used to sexist comments and remarks, but I was also from a time of calling people out on their problematic behaviour. They'd learn fast that I wouldn't put up with it. "As long as you don't mind if I deal with it on my own."

"Alright," he finally said. "I'll agree to it, but I have rules in my shop class. You follow them, you'll make it through. I won't have you coming to simply distract the boys, distractions get them hurt, so if you're here for a crush, I suggest you find a different way."

I scoffed. "Sir, if I wanted to attract a boy, I'd talk to him. I wouldn't take a class where we could chop off a finger for not paying attention. I want to learn."

"Alright then." He signed my paper.

"Good morning!" I called out to the secretary. She smiled as she saw me.

"Miss. Thompson. How did the paperwork go?"

"Better than expected, actually," I said. I handed over the filled out forms. "Everything is signed, by all the required people, except for the independent study ones. I haven't gotten a chance to run that by them yet. I'm hoping it'll be okay, but we'll see."

"Well, best of luck. Give me five minutes and I'll see what I can do for you in terms of your schedule."

"Thank you," I said, before I realised something. "I'm so sorry, for the life of me I can't seem to recall your name."

"Ms. Callahan," she said.

"Callahan," I repeated, trying to make it stick in memory. "Thank you Ms. Callahan. I really do appreciate it.

"This also has to be signed by the principal," she said suddenly. "They might not agree."

"I'm prepared for that," I said, nodding. I had seen that it needed their signature too.

"Wait one minute then."

Ms. Callahan walked over to the office at the side. She entered the office and I waited a few moments before she walked out followed by another woman.

"Miss. Thompson," the other woman called me. "I hear you want to change your schedule."

"Yes," I answered.

"Any particular reason why?"

"Well, I've been thinking a lot this summer. I need to start branching out, strengthening my weaknesses in other areas of show business. Like building sets."

"Indeed. You are aware that we haven't had many female students express an interest in shop class." It was a polite way of telling me the same thing the teacher told me.

"I am, and I am also aware that the rules and regulations of the school clearly state that no student shall be excluded from a class of their choosing due to their gender."

Her eyebrows raised. "You've done your homework."

"I want to be prepared." I was trying very hard not to call her ma'am, despite how polite it seemed. I hated when people called me it.

"Very well. I will agree to it on one condition," she said. "We start with a trial run. As long as there are no prevalent issues, you will be able to continue it. Am I understood?"

"Yes!" I grinned at her. "Thank you!"

She looked a little surprised, perhaps from my enthusiasm. "You're very welcome." She signed the papers and gave them back to Ms. Callahan who smiled at me.

When she was finished with rearranging my schedule, she handed the papers back to me and said two words: "Good luck."

The first class of the day was Statistics. It seemed to be a bit early for a math class but I had little choice in the matter. Not if I wanted to stick with it. Because I had gotten to school so early, I was the first one in the class, even after the hold up in the office. The teacher was at the board. He was another older man, who had a beard so long it looked like he'd be able to tuck it into his belt. I wondered briefly if he ever dressed up as Santa for the kids.

"Yes?" he asked once he caught sight of me.

"Good morning, sir," I said, trying to start the introduction right. If there as anything my job taught me, it was that first impressions were important. "I'm Tammy Thompson. I just got reassigned to your class."

"Forms?"

I handed over the paperwork.

"Why Statistics?" he asked.

"Everything uses statistics," I answered, remembering my first lecture in the course. "From businesses to research, and even just shopping, if you think about it."

"Alright," he said. "There are no assigned seats. There's no talking and if you have questions, raise your hand. I don't have time to catch you up so if you need help, ask one of your peers."

He sounded a lot like one of my high school math teachers. It was a little strange.

I nodded though. "Yes sir."

"Good. Sit down."

I had completely forgotten how creepy American schools were. The voices that I heard the other day as I walked down the hall was the students reciting the pledge of allegiance. It was the weirdest thing I had ever seen. I got through it by faking it mostly. It was hard to recite and promise something I didn't know or believe in. At most in Canada, we sang along to the national anthem each morning.

I got to lunch and stopped in the doorway. I had avoided this yesterday by sitting by myself and planning out how I was going to survive until I got home. Mostly that involved my plan to change my schedule.

I looked around the room slowly. Ally, and I was sure it was Ally this time, waved at me from across the room. I kept looking around though and I saw Robin sitting with a group of other people. I waved at Robin, saying hi as I walked by and sat with Ally. I couldn't change Tammy's life too suddenly and there had to be some reason why she was friends with Ally.

"Finally! Why weren't you in English?" Ally asked as I sat across from her. There was another girl next to her who I vaguely recognized from a group picture that Tammy had.

"I changed my schedule," I said. I unwrapped the sandwich that Tammy's mother had made for me. She had offered to give me money to buy lunch but that felt like a waste of money. Especially for

cafeteria food.

"Oh my god," the other girl said. "Did you get out of English? Tell me how because I'm so over Ms. Marshall. Like, why are we already getting assignments? Just gag me with a spoon!"

That was quite the expression. "Probably because it's required and if you do multiple small assignments, you're less likely to have to do a major one at the end of the year."

The two girls just stared at me. "What?"

"It's all about grading, right? The more small marks you get, the less a major assignment is going to count for. As long as you do them, you'll have a decent grade at the end of the year. Seems like she's trying to help students out for their grades if they go to university."

"Did you really just say that?" Ally asked. "I can't even."

I frowned at her. It was way too similar to a phrase in my time, and the way she said it was kind of rude. "It's true, isn't it?"

"How should I know? I'm not a nerd."

"Being a nerd has nothing to do with it," I snapped back. I was getting tired of her tone. "It's common sense."

"Ugh!" Ally stood up and the other girl followed suit. "What is your damage? You were fine all summer and now it's like you turned into some freak."

"Because I disagreed with you?" I asked, totally confused. Did they not have actual discussions?

"Not even!" She turned to the other girl. "Let's go."

I watched them walk away, talking to each other. I was totally confused. So much for my damage control. What went wrong? I tried to be friendly but the fact that Ally couldn't handle someone giving their opinion and pointing something out, didn't state much for their friendship. This was the same girl who didn't even come after me when I ran out in a panic. I wasn't sure how serious Tammy was

about their friendship, or if it was a mutually beneficial situation. Maybe they had just grown up together and stayed friends because they felt they should. If so, it didn't seem like something that would last. Maybe they weren't expecting it to if Tammy was going to actually go to Nashville.

I finished eating alone. It gave me an opportunity to observe the masses, so to speak. It also was a little bit of a relief. At least alone I didn't have to put so much work into pretending I was someone I was not.

The afternoon was mainly for shop class. I mentally tried to prepare myself for walking in there. It couldn't be worse than walking into a boardroom and making a presentation on a client.

The boys were seated in whatever seats were available around the room. They noticed me slowly as one by one they nudged each other and pointed me out. I walked in and sat down in the nearest available seat next to a boy with another unfortunate haircut.

"Hey Thompson, you lost?" One of the boys across the room called out.

"Nope," I said, putting my bag down and settling myself in. "Right where I want to be."

"Really? Maybe the right place would be right here, baby, on my lap." I saw the teacher behind him, eyebrows raised as he waited for my response. At least he was trusting me to take care of myself.

"If I wanted to be disappointed, sure." I looked over at the boy. "You want to screw around, be my guest, but you have hands, don't involve me." The other boys started laughing and I watched as this kid's face turned red.

"That's enough," Mr. Caldwell called out as he stepped into the room. "Boys, you've noticed we have someone new in our class. If any of you mess around because of it, I'll kick you out. Got it? I won't have people making dangerous mistakes because they can't take the fact that a girl is here."

The boys all replied in a variety of "yes, sir."

"That was impressive," a voice next to me said. I looked over at the boy I was sitting by. He gave me a smile. "Haven't heard a come back like that in awhile."

"Thanks?" I said, before turning to see that the teacher was showing the instructions on the board.

"You're welcome. I'm Jonathan, by the way."

"Tammy," I said. I looked at him out of the corner of my eye. He was watching the teacher and his body language didn't seem to be angled towards me. Over all, he just seemed friendly.

"Nice to meet you," he said, before smiling at me and looking back at the teacher. Huh. It was nice to see that not all the guys here were assholes. At least, so far. It was still early.

The rest of the class was spent with the boys working on planning their individual projects for the year, and me learning the tools of the trade so to speak. Jonathan was helpful in a useful sort of way and offered me suggestions and tips on working some of the tools. He didn't make it weird or creepy like some guys did. He worked quietly. I appreciated it.

I started to get the hang of things by the time the class ended. I was given a week to figure out what I wanted to complete for my project. It had to be something impressive enough to get Tammy a good grade. Luckily Jonathan had offered his help if I asked for it and the teacher promised to answer any questions I had. All in all, it fared a lot better than I had expected, like most things so far, monsters not included.

I kept expecting something terrible to happen, but so far the most terrible thing that happened was the fact that I kept waking up in Tammy's body. I made it through the week with little problem. Aside from the few small rumours running around about Tammy. Apparently she was a bit of a slut for wanting to take a class that was mainly boys. I ignored it. It wasn't the worst that I had heard in my life, especially about me, and it didn't really matter. It wasn't about

me. Least, it didn't feel like it, not when they weren't using my name.

It was finally Friday, and I was heading out of my final class for the day. I had plans to spend most of it alone, and possibly finding the library in the town. Since google wasn't a thing, I needed to go old school. Or, current school? It got very confusing at times.

I felt someone grab my arm as I headed for the doors. I looked to my side to see Robin holding my arm and guiding me away from them. She was silent the entire way. I was tempted to pull away but she looked concerned, and upset, and I felt I should repay the favour. She had, after all, come after me.

I waited until we had finally entered a room. I looked around. There were instruments in cages and music stands by chairs.

"Bounce!" she called out. There was a lone clarinet player in the room.

"I booked the room," the guy called out.

"Get out Keith!"

"What's going on?" I asked, turning to face her. She had her back against the door and she looked like she was thinking. She finally seemed to get her thoughts in order.

"What's going on with you?"

Fear struck through me. "What are you talking about?"

"Look, okay," she stepped towards me. "I've been watching you all week. I don't know what's going on but it's not you Tammy. You changed courses. You're covered in bruises that you keep touching while looking spaced. You haven't been singing in the halls, or in class, and you looked at Harrington and literally ran out of the room like something was on fire. Either he did something, or..."

"Who? Harrington?"

"Yes," she said. She looked so earnest that I was kind of touched. "If he hurt you, you need to tell someone."

I stared at her before I felt myself smiling. How often was it that girls did this for each other, in any time. "He didn't do anything," I said, smiling softly. "No one did." At least not the way she seemed to think.

"Then what is all this?" she asked. "What's *happening* to you?""I figured out my priorities!" I said. I couldn't help smiling. All the fear left me as she had kept talking. "I cannot tell you how much I appreciate you Robin. You came after me when I had a panic attack, and now you're worried that *Steve Harrington* hurt me? No one touched me. No one hurt me. I just spent a lot of time thinking this summer. Turns out I was busy trying to hit all the high notes when I'm not made for that. My voice is stronger in a lower range and I don't know about you, but if I'm going to hit Nashville after school, I have a lot of time to make up for. I wasted so much! And I'm so distracted and I keep running into things! I also realised I need to expand my skill set. So, shop class. I figure if I can learn to make things for sets, that will help me get started. Even if I start at the bottom."

"Are you...sure?" It was so sweet. I stared at this girl, who was so certain something was wrong that she went out of her way to check on me, to give me a safe space so I could talk.

"Robin, I am so sure." I felt a rush of affection for this girl. "I cannot tell you how much I appreciate this, even if it wasn't needed."

"Okay," she nodded and stepped back. "Okay. I'm sorry."

I stepped forward. "There is no need to be sorry. You saw a girl who seemed like she was in trouble and you tried to do something about it! How many people can say the same? The world needs more people like you, Robin."

She looked surprised and a little embarrassed. "No it doesn't."

"It really does. Trust me."

Robin and I left each other on good terms. And with plans to eat lunch together in the next week. I got into Tammy's mother's car in a better mood than I had been in all week.

"I have great news!" her mother said as I sat down.

"What's that?"

"Buster is back! In full health!"

I stared at her. Buster? Who the hell was Buster? The only thing I could think of was that it was a pet, after all, who named someone Buster? Then again, who named someone Tammy?

"Oh my god," I finally reacted. "Buster!"

"Yeah! The vet called today and said he's good to come home! He just has to wear a cone to keep him from licking his stitches."

Definitely a pet then. Hopefully it was a cat. It seemed easier to scoop up litter than pick up poop. Something suddenly occurred to me.

"Where's all his stuff?"

"In the wash, of course," she said. "Though, we set it all back up now that it's clean."

There seemed to be an answer for everything. I thought back to it. How did I not notice an animal in the house? The answer was obvious. I hadn't looked. I had spent the week hiding in Tammy's room anytime I was in the house.

We got to the house and I followed Tammy's mother inside. I heard the paws before I saw him. Her mother moved aside and I found myself staring at a large, older beagle with a cone around his neck. The dog stared at me. I watched as he sniffed the air before it suddenly looked like he was glaring at me. The beagle, Buster, turned and walked away.

Tammy's mother looked at me. "That's weird," she said. I looked at her quickly before she smiled. "Don't worry. The vet said he might not be his usual self while he heals. He'll be back to adoring you in no time."

Fuck.

The problem was going to be that Buster adored Tammy. I was not Tammy, not...really, and somehow the dog knew it. I stared at the dog as I ate dinner. He was ignoring me. He had ignored me since the moment we saw each other. Tammy's parents were laughing it off. Promising that he would go back to being the affectionate lug I apparently knew and loved. I wasn't so sure.

"So," I said softly, staring at this dog. Tammy's parents were asleep and I had come down in the very early morning to see if I could do something about this dog. It felt like the world was still asleep, and so was the dog. He opened one eye at me and then closed it again. Buster was ignoring me. "Listen, pup," I said. "I know I'm not her, but we gotta work together here. I'm not that bad, I promise."

He stretched and then huffed at me.

"Well then," I said. "That was rude." I got up and looked around. There was a bag of treats on the counter that Tammy's father had used to get Buster to take his medicine. I picked it up. At the sound of the bag, the dog had moved faster than I had seen him move so far. "Ah ha!" I said, smiling widely. "So you can be bought!" I tried not to laugh but I gave the dog a treat. I reached out to touch him and he stepped back. "Alright," I said. I leaned back on my heels. "We'll work on it."

"Tammy?"

I turned at the sound and saw Tammy's father coming down the stairs. "Hi daddy!" I said back, cringing a little inside. The term was ruined for me in terms of actual family after years of social media.

"What are you doing up so early?"

"I just woke up early and I just...wanted to make sure he was okay." I smiled at her father while I motioned to the dog.

"Okay. Your mother will be up soon and she'll make breakfast." I stared at him. Why couldn't he?

"Why can't you?" I asked.

He looked stunned. "What?"

I shrugged. "Can't you make something? I mean, mom cooks all the time. Might be nice if we surprised her some times with making it ourselves?" I kept it plural so that I didn't overwhelm him too much.

"Well, I...she likes to cook," he finally said.

"Just like you like to go to work? And I like to go to school?"

"I...I never thought about that." Before we could go further, there was the sound of steps on the stairs.

"Am I the last to wake up?" Tammy's mother was coming down, dressed in a bathrobe.

"I woke up early," I said. "I was just asking if dad would make eggs." I grinned at him.

"Your father has to get ready for work, and you have to get ready for school. Go on, by the time you finish, I'll have breakfast ready for you."

"But-"

"No buts!" She motioned me back to the stairs. "Get back up those stairs."

"I have time!" I argued back.

"Tamara Katherine Thompson, are you arguing with me?" She put her hands on her hips and raised her eyebrows. I let myself be led out of the kitchen by Tammy's father. Her full name. They had called her by her full name. I had thought Tammy was an odd name but it never occurred to me that it was a nickname. What was more important though was the middle name: Katherine. It was close enough to my name that I could use that...if I could convince everyone. I wondered how they'd react if I asked them to call me Kate.

[tbc]